

# English Toolkit: Indicator 1.2.5

Student Handout: English: Indicator 1.2.5

## Goal 1.0 Reading, Reviewing and Responding to Texts

Expectation 1.2 The student will construct, examine, and extend meaning of traditional and contemporary works recognized as having significant literary merit.

Indicator 1.2.5 The student will extend or further develop meaning by explaining the implications of the text for the reader or contemporary society.

Assessment Limits:

Identifying and/or explaining ideas and issues of a text or across texts that may have implications for readers or contemporary society

Extending ideas found in a text or across texts by connecting them to ideas that have personal or societal relevance

## Public Release - Selected Response Item - Released in 2009

English Indicator 1.2.5

Read this excerpt from the first chapter of [The Sea of Grass](#), a novel set in New Mexico in the late 1800s. Then answer the following item.

Reading this excerpt would most likely encourage a reader to

- A. question why people marry
- B. respect the authority of older relatives
- C. appreciate the value of attending school
- D. understand the lost freedom of the frontier

Correct Answer

- D. understand the lost freedom of the frontier

## Item

Read this excerpt from the first chapter of [\*The Sea of Grass\*](#), a novel set in New Mexico in the late 1800s. Then answer the following item.

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## Handouts



That lusty pioneer blood is tamed now, broken and gelded<sup>1</sup> like the wild horse and the frontier settlement. And I think that I shall never see it flowing through human veins again as it did in my Uncle Jim Brewton riding a lathered horse across his shaggy range or standing in his massive ranch house, bare of furniture as a garret,<sup>2</sup> and holding together his empire of grass and cattle by the fire in his eyes.

His rude empire is dead and quartered today like a steer on the meat-block, but I still lie in bed at night and see it tossing, pitching, leaping in the golden sunlight of more than fifty years ago, sweeping up to his very door, stretching a hundred and twenty miles north and south along the river, and rolling as far into the sunset as stock could roam—a ranch larger than Massachusetts with Connecticut thrown in, his fabulous herds of Texas cattle sprinkled like grains of cinnamon across the horizons, his name a legend even then, his brand familiar as the A B C's in every packinghouse, and his word the law, not dead sentences in a book, but a moving finger writing on a cottonwood tree where all who rode could very plainly read.

I can see his bedroom, just a bunk in the corner, with a fancy horsehair bridle and ropes on the wall, and a brown buckskin partly cut away in strips for whang leather. And I can see his huge parlor, without rugs or furniture, piled to the pine rafters with white sacks of flour and burlapped hills of sugar and green coffee, and wooden buttes<sup>3</sup> of boxed tobacco, dried fruits, and canned tomatoes, just the provisions for his hundred hands and everyone else who passed that way, rancher or cowboy, settler or prospector, Mexican, Indian, or outlaw, all welcome at his table.

But what moves across my eye unforgettably is his spring roundup when six or seven wagons working back from the Arizona line reached the headquarters range with a vast, almost mythical herd the like of which will never be seen in this country again. Farther than the eye could strain through the dust, the grass was colored with milling cattle, while bulls rode and fought, and cows and calves bawled,<sup>4</sup> and countless horns clacked, and sixty or seventy of us kept saddling fresh mounts and galloping here and there in a stirring, daylong excitement.

<sup>5</sup>The free wild life we lived on that shaggy prairie was to me the life of the gods. And that there should be anyone who would not love it as we did, who should even hate it passionately and secretly, and yet the memory of whose delicate presence in that violent land still stirs me with emotion after fifty years, had not occurred to me then. But I was only a boy whose face had never known a razor, in a pair of California britches turned up to let my boots into the stirrups, that early fall day I rode with rebellious young back to Salt Fork to be shipped off to Missouri to school before my uncle would fetch back to the ranch the scarcest article in the territory, a woman, the one we had never seen, who was coming all the way from St. Louis to marry him.

<sup>6</sup>At the edge of town I scowled<sup>5</sup> at an encampment of settlers' tents and wagons, the largest I remembered. They seemed to be waiting for something. Then I rode up to the hotel and heard someone say that the telegraph line was open after having been cut again.

"I'm going to let it to you, Hal, to see the Colonel gets this," the red-faced station agent told me mysteriously.

He handed me a sheet of unfolded gray paper, the writing in pencil and dated at St. Louis nearly a week before. It was, I think, the first telegram I had ever seen and for a moment I had the impression that the paper itself had come in some up-to-date manner over the telegraph wire and that the execrable<sup>6</sup> writing was that of this woman who had signed it Lutie and who said with love that she was not stopping off in Denver as she had planned but would arrive in Salt Fork on a morning I knew was tomorrow.

I had not seen my uncle for more than two weeks, and with the telegram unpleasant as a perfumed handkerchief in my pocket, I rode down to the shipping corrals, half expecting to see his herd of fall beef steers come sweeping down off the sand hills into town like the Rio Grande running bank-full after the summer rains, washing across the tracks, flooding the stockpens and overflowing along the riverbank from where, until shipped, they would fill the town night and day with their bawling.

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<sup>1</sup> gelded: weakened, made more manageable

<sup>2</sup> garret: small room on the top floor of a house; attic

<sup>3</sup> buttes: hills; mounds

<sup>4</sup> bawled: cried or sobbed loudly

<sup>5</sup> scowled: frowned; gave a look of anger

<sup>6</sup> execrable: extremely inferior; very bad

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